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CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY AND RACIST IDEOLOGY: A CASE STUDY OF NAZI THEOLOGY AND APARTHEID THEOLOGY

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Abstract: This article focuses on the role that distorted Christian theology played in the construction of the racial ideologies of Nazism and Apartheid. The central theoretical argument is that these theologies were instrumental in sacralising the history of a specific group by creating origin myths, by idolising the ingroup, defining the outgroup, by providing racist ideologies with rituals and symbols and by creating final utopian solutions. The theological doctrines that were used are characterised by certain common features, such as a collectivist anthropology, the identification of the church with an ethnic group, the view of history as a source of revelation, and the appropriation of myths. The article concludes with the remark that the modern global environment is particularly vulnerable to racism. It is therefore important for Christianity to clearly identify the common characteristics of pseudo-racist theology and to educate its adherents on the difference between authentic theology and pseudo-theology, so that they will not fall prey to destructive forms of religion that encourage racism.

1. Introduction

Racism is the process whereby social groups categorize other groups as different or inferior on the basis of phenotypic characteristics, cultural markers or national origin[1]. A particular group's physical traits are seen as intrinsically related to their culture, personality and intelligence. These traits are perceived as innate and not subject to change [2]. People are consequently judged on the basis of their group membership and not on personal attributes. One of the main features of racism is that it often needs an ideology to provide its views with a non-negotiable and fixed status that will ensure the durability of ethnic inequality. As long as racist practises are not questioned, a cohesive racial ideology is not necessary. However, when racist practises come under attack, systematic racial ideologies are constructed in order to provide logical foundations for racial resentment that rationalize and legitimize patterns of dominance and subordination. Full-blown racist ideology, for instance, developed only after the emancipation of slaves when continued domination of blacks without the institution of slavery required further justification[3].

Ideologies often use religion to provide their views with a fixed status. An ideology can be defined as a mode of thought that elevates a single aspect of life to an all embracing principle in terms of which the whole of reality is interpreted. This article specifically focuses on the role that pseudo-Christian theology played in the construction of the racial

ideologies of Nazism in Germany and Apartheid in South Africa. It investigates the various functions that pseudo-theology performed in the construction of these ideologies, and it seeks to identify some common elements that are present in these ideologies and that might be used in the future to justify racial ideologies.

It must be noted beforehand that this article focuses on distortions of Christian theology that were used to justify racism and does not attempt to blame the Christian religion as such for the construction of racist ideologies. Most Christian churches in Germany and South Africa opposed Nazism and Apartheid fervently.

2. The use of Christian theology in racist ideology

A distortion of religion can help ideologies to change the collective behaviour of people and reinforce an attitude of obedience and sacrifice. The racist ideologies of Nazism and Apartheid used religion to give it a divine commission and divine mission. These theologies were not authentically Christian. It contradicts the essential principles of Christian universalism that rules out any kind of inequality on the basis of racial and ethnic difference. These theologies did not arise as responses to profound religious experiences or encounters with the numinous, but merely as ideas that, as a consequence of their social utility, have caught fire in the crucible of the modern consciousness.[4]

When we compare the racist theologies that were used to justify Nazism and Apartheid it is evident that the methods, features and common elements are the same, though the ideological content differs.

3.1 Creating origin myths

In order to justify a racial order, racial ideology needs to affirm or reinvent the past. A distorted vision of the past explains the present much better than the real complexities of history. Both in Apartheid and Nazism theological constructions were used to create origin myths. These theological constructions were mixed with myths in a religious and scientific guise that explained the origins of peoples and the mystery of evil. The construction of origin myths were needed to create a sense of belonging and exclusiveness that would achieve the integration of a group. After all, the whole notion of *race* suggests a communality of descent or character.

In Germany Neo-Romanticism endorsed the mystical Aryan race myth and in the process influenced German Protestantism. According to the earlier Romantics such as Fichte and Herder, language and life are bound together in an organic unity[5]. Language is an expression of the spiritual character, creative genius and soul of a nation. It is through language that an individual becomes conscious of himself, identifies himself with a

people and develops his political and moral character[6]. True self-determination is only possible in the process of speaking a pure original language. Fichte distinguished between superior and inferior nations on the basis of language[7]. According to Fichte the German spirit is the bearer of all general values, because an intrinsic connection exists between the divine life of God and the mysterious inner life of the German nation[8]. German nationality is for Fichte something divine, an organ through which the eternal Spirit reveals itself[9]. Neo-Romanticism combined this view of the nation as an organic entity with the Aryan myth. The Aryans were supposedly an original white race whose place of origin was India and whose language found its linguistic origins in Latin, Greek, Persian and Sanskrit. The superiority of the Aryans becomes evident when their language is compared to the Hebrew related Semitic languages. The original white race of Aryans migrated from India and founded empires wherever they came. They are the ancestors of the modern Europeans, in particular the Germans, who are the only people who speak the language of the *Urvolk* and who are in touch with their own spiritual and racial origins. Nazi ideologues such as Hitler and Rosenberg attributed the crises of post First World War Germany to the alienation of the German people's racial heritage through intermarriage. Salvation entailed the recovery of that heritage through national programs of biological regeneration[10]. The Aryan myth established a somatic norm, not only in Germany, but all around Europe. Whiteness became the criteria of the value of human beings. German churches were soon infected by the Aryan ideology. In the period of 1933-1935 the German Christian faction supported the Aryan laws implemented by the state and called for Aryanization in the church as well as the state.

Whereas racist Europeans developed the Aryan origin myth, the Afrikaners of the nineteenth century regarded themselves as a people assembled, called and elected by God to serve Him in a continent of darkness and barbarianism. The doctrine of an elect people afforded the Afrikaners a means to create a new society. Theological ideology was integrated into the whole culture of the Afrikaner. The history of Israel was literally applied to Afrikaner history. The Afrikaners saw themselves as the covenant people of God. As the Israelites were liberated from bondage to the Egyptians, the Afrikaners were liberated by God from the bondage of the British. As the Israelites were led into the desert by God in search of the Promised land, the Afrikaners were guided by God in the Great Trek to find its own promised land. As God made a covenant with Israel at Sinai, He made a covenant with the Afrikaners at Blood river[11]. The battles that the Afrikaners fought were not seen as black-white conflicts, but rather conflicts between believers and non-believers[12]. The election ideology that the Afrikaners developed was not authentically Christian. In both the Old and New Testament God's election is portrayed as an action of God that transcends ethnic, cultural and gender divides[13].

Unfortunately, the Afrikaner's view of themselves as the elect covenant nation of God was one of the root causes of segregation laws when the Union was formed in 1910[14].

The abovementioned origin myths served one common goal: To strengthen nationalist and collectivist sentiments and consolidate group or national interests.

3.2. Idolising the ingroup

Origin myths sacralise the history of a group. The result is that the ingroup is bestowed with a superior status. In Germany noted critical theologians, deeply influenced by the nationalistic and racialist influences of Romanticism and Idealism, struggled to reconcile Jesus with Germanism, and Germanism with Jesus[15]. Albert Schweitzer[16] states it as follows:

'Historical criticism had become, in the hands of most of those who practised it, a secret struggle to reconcile the Germanic religious Spirit with the Spirit of Jesus of Nazareth'.

Baur, for instance, combined Herder's idea that each group of people is animated by a single spiritual principle, with Hegel's idea that these spiritual principles are ordered into a narrative of progressive dialectical development[17]. According to Baur[18] history is the sphere in which the Spirit reveals itself concretely:

'Revelation is the act of the Spirit, in which an objective reality confronts subjective consciousness as an immediate given, and becomes for the subject the object of a faith whose content is the absolute idea'.

Religion is essentially a relation of Spirit to Spirit, in which Spirit mediates itself with itself through the activity of thinking.[19] He distinguished three major historical epochs related to different groups of people that manifested different degrees of awareness of the Absolute Idea. The Oriental Jews lacked spiritual inwardness, but gave the world monotheism, although tinged with nationalism and particularism. The Western Greeks possessed spiritual freedom, but lacked an objective foundation in monotheism. From the Romans the Christians received universalism, allowing Christianity to unite the objective and subjective into an absolute religion. According to Baur, Jesus purified the essential spirit of Judaism and Greece into the Christian religion which is the absolute religion and which is appropriate for the whole world[20]. Christianity, however, underwent its own spiritual development. Christian history is fuelled by the conflict between the Eastern servile legalism of Jewish Christianity (thesis) and the Western gospel of Pauline freedom (antithesis) that found its synthesis in Catholicism.[21]. Embedded in Baur's theology is the racialist notion that Western Christian theology is the highest manifestation of the evolution of the Spirit, while Eastern Christian theology is permeated with servility, legalism and despotism.   Baur,

indeed, translated the racialist assumptions of Hegelian philosophy into Christian theology.

Racist theologians soon capitalised on Fichte, Hegel and Baur's idealistic thinking. Houston Steward Chamberlain (1855-1926) provided German nationalism with an elaborate racist theology. According to Chamberlain the Christian religion is the natural religion of the Aryan-Teutonic man. Judaism (thesis) gave rise to Jesus (antithesis), who negated Judaism to produce Christianity (synthesis). Jesus is the supreme symbol of the Aryan race and is the great contrast to the Semite. He will cure society of its Semitic sickness by overcoming materialism in the same way he has overcome the Pharisees[22].

Paul Althaus and Emmanuel Hirsch combined the Fichtean concept of the *Volk* as a unity of men with a similar spirit with the neo-Lutheran idea that the *Volk* is a creation ordinance of God. The result was that they absoluted the *Volk* to such a degree that the *Volk* became the medium of God's presence and therefore demanded unconditional obedience, discipleship and sacrifice[23].

The German Christian Movement, who supported the Nazi Reich of Hitler, united in the 1930's around the figure of the Aryan Christ and the *Volk* as a divine ordinance. Jesus was pictured as an Aryan, the Old Testament and writings of Mathew, Luke and Paul were discarded as Jewish, and the doctrines of sin and grace were rejected. Only a positive Christianity without the guilt of sin was fit for a great race[24]. Neo-Fichtean concepts of the German blood, race and soil was inserted into German theology. The heart of the people is the bond of blood that runs from generation to generation and determines man's spiritual being. Inherited blood gives itself the form of race so that reverence for race is a sacred obligation. The soil is the sanctuary in which God meets people and is therefore sacred[25]. Since God created blood, soil and race, and reveals Himself in blood and race, the German people have to cultivate a religion that flows from German soil, its own nature and from the German race[26]. The German Christians soon demanded that the visible organisation of the church should correspond to the historical and *völkisch* divisions of the Christian world because it is only in their membership of the *Volk* that people can unite themselves with God. The German People's Church thus organised themselves on the principle of one People, one Reich, one Faith[27]. Expectantly the emphasis on blood also led to the notion that race must be kept pure and sound as a commandment of God[28]. The result was that race was made the decisive criterion of church membership. Germany was seen as an elect nation, because of the special characteristics they supposedly possess[29].

J.D du Toit was the first prominent Afrikaner theologian who provided a systematic biblical justification for the forced separation between groups. In a speech to a congress of an Afrikaner culture organisation called the *Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultuur*, he used the

separation motive in the creation narrative of Genesis 1, the cultural mandate in Genesis 1:28 and the story of the Tower of Babel as a justification for segregation. According to this view, separation was one of God's creational motives from the start. In the same way that God separated lightness and darkness, He wills the separation between nations. This exegesis is strongly influenced by the idea that black is a symbol of degeneracy, baseness and evil, a sign of danger and repulsion, while whiteness is synonymous with being Christian. According to Du Toit, God gave the command that humanity must fill the earth in Genesis 1:28 because he desired the earth to be filled with a great diversity of races and peoples. Instead humanity opted to disobey the creation principle of separation by staying together and building the Tower of Babel. God therefore decided to disperse humanity by force at Babel. From this he concludes that a nation that God brings together may not be separated, while different nations may not be integrated with each other[30].

Since the 1950's, Apartheid theology used the philosophical perspectives of Neo-Calvinist Kuyperianism, neo-Fichteanism and the abovementioned creational motives to justify the privileged treatment of white people. The Dutch theologian Abraham Kuyper distinguished between various societal spheres each with their own internal laws and authority, which were not to be encroached upon by other spheres or authorities[31]. His intention with the principle of sphere sovereignty was to prevent power abuse by the state. South African neo-Calvinist philosophers, most notably H.G Stoker, moved beyond Kuyper by applying the principle of sphere sovereignty, not only to societal spheres, but also to different cultural spheres that have their own structural principles and own unique destinies. According to Stoker[32] these cultural spheres find their origin and legitimacy in the creational ordinances of God with the result that the Afrikaner nation is sovereign in its own sphere and has an own calling and function that distinguishes it from other nations.

The Apartheid theology of the Dutch Reformed Church, especially its policies on mission, was also influenced by the neo-Fichtean view of the *Volk*. The history of the Afrikanervolk was seen as a form of divine revelation. Every nation is created by God with its own *soul* and *temperament*[33]. However, the souls of all nations are not equally developed. The maturity of the soul of a nation depends on its exposure to the gospel. A hierarchical view of nations developed from this notion. Indigenous African nations that had little exposure to the gospel were nations of a lower order than Christian nations. Nations of a higher order may under no circumstances mingle with nations of a lower order, because it will deform their own values[34].

These Kuyperian and neo-Fichtean perspectives were all combined in the 1974 Report of the Dutch Reformed Church: *Ras, volk en nasie en nasieverhoudinge in die lig van die Skrif.* The Report justified Apartheid on the principle of pluriformity. God's creation is characterised by plurality and

differentiation and not homogeneity. The story of the Tower of Babel is a clear indication that the essence of sin lies therein that it seeks uniformity and integration. This is contrary to God's creative will that seeks unity in plurality[35]. The principle of pluriformity is then combined in the report with a romanticist view of language that attaches a biological meaning to language. At Babel God created different languages so that every nation would develop its own culture. The differentiation in languages gave 'character and momentum to the process of differentiation'[36]. It necessarily leads to the division of humanity into different cultures, religions and races.

Whenever a certain group is viewed as superior or is equated with goodness, theology and ideology enters the realm of dichotomic distinctions. The superiority of certain groups naturally presupposes the inferiority of other groups.

3.3 Identifying the outgroup

Racism always implies that the superior group has the power to propose a definition of the Other and to apply it to the subordinate group. Integral to racism is the consciousness of the tension between *we* as the ingroup and *they* as the outgroup[37]. Humans are subdivided into distinct hereditary groups that are innately different in their social behaviour and mental capacities and that can therefore be ranked as superior or inferior[38]. These dichotomic racial definitions help people to understand and cope with a complex world around them. The devaluation of others and the setting up of a particular group as a scapegoat raise self-esteem and provides explanations for life problems that are otherwise difficult to comprehend[39]. It creates an illusion of unity through the oppositional force of a symbolic *other* and it provides an instrument for defining belonging or exclusion that justifies the differential treatment of others[40].

In Germany racial theology transformed the Jew into an evil principle that was seen as a threat to racial purity and Aryan survival. The Aryans and the Jews were transformed into antithetical symbols around which the conflicting elements in human existence were organised: goodness and evil, life and death, beauty and ugliness etc[41]. Anti-Semitism became a cosmological religious principle. The German Christian Church condemned all association with Jews, especially intermarriage, and even mission to Jews because it would allow the entry of foreign blood into the national body, in 1932[42]. The German People's Church demanded during a demonstration in Berlin in 1933 that Christianity should emancipate itself from the Old Testament with its Jewish morality and that the Aryan paragraph, that allows only Aryans in the church, should be put into effect[43]. The Saxon's People's Church also rejected the notion of the Old Testament as primary revelation of God, since the specific morality and

religion of the Jewish people has been transcended. The curse of God lies on the Jewish people because they crucified Christ[44].

In nineteenth century colonial South Africa, the subjugation of indigenous peoples was often justified through the myth of the curse upon Ham's son Canaan (Gen 9-10). Genesis 9-10 relates how a drunken Noah's sons encountered him. Shem and Japheth did not look upon him, but covered their father, while Ham looked upon Noah and did not cover him. As a result Ham's son Canaan was cursed by Noah and told that he would be the servant of his brethren. Racist colonial theology viewed Ham as an African and as suffering the divine punishment of his descendants being made servants to other people. This theological doctrine was a clear form of *eisegesis*, since there is no allusion in the Old Testament to the African characteristics of Ham.

Twentieth century Apartheid theology portrayed communism as the visible antithesis of Christianity. Communism was viewed as the only alternative to Apartheid. The rejection of the social separation policies of Apartheid would necessarily imply the acceptance of an atheist communist worldview, because doctrines of social equality have their origins in communism[45].

From the abovementioned it becomes clear that racist ideologies exist in the making of difference[46]. Its premise is the difference and irreconcilability of different groups and its message is a message of love for the ingroup and justified hate of the outgroup. By cultivating anger against an outgroup, a culture of impunity is nurtured, because the members of the ingroup are encouraged to apply a different set of moral principles in their behaviour towards the outgroup.

3.4. Creating racial rites and symbols

Religious rituals, cults and symbols play an important role in giving racial ideologies a divine sanction and mystic image. It reinforces a sense of community and gives racial ideology a transcendental character. These modified religious rituals and teachings often have little to do with traditional Christian teachings and morals. It is rather the appropriation of religious symbolism and exploitation of religious imagery that are important[47].

The extreme German Christian movements deified the Führer in their Six Theses for German Christians, by describing him as a personal representative and revelation of Christ. Hitler was described as a true Messiah of the German People, a mediator between God and people, who required absolute obedience. National Socialism was described as the way of the Spirit that God wills for the Christian church of the German nation[48]. The bloodflag symbolised the sacrificial blood necessary for the German Reich's victory. It was an obvious allegory to the cross[49].

In Apartheid theology and Afrikaner nationalism the Day of the Covenant had a very important symbolic meaning. The Day of the Covenant originates from a vow which the *Voortrekkers* took several days before they engaged in an armed conflict with the Zulus on December, 16th 1838. The *Voortrekkers* vowed that if God granted them victory, they would annually commemorate this day as a Sunday. The vow was initially not celebrated by the whole Afrikaner community, because it was possibly understood as a promise binding the individual *Voortrekkers* who had partaken in the battle and their families and descendants, without committing the whole Afrikaner community that were scattered around the southern parts of South Africa[50]. However, the status accorded to 16 December among Afrikaner people rose considerably with growing British pressure on the Afrikaner republics at the end of the nineteenth century and the rise of Afrikaner nationalism in the early twentieth century. The day was used by Afrikanernationalists, such as Paul Kruger, to compare the situation of the Afrikaner with the situation of Israel in the Old Testament[51]. The events at Blood river were seen as a sign that the Afrikaner nation is the elect nation of God. In the Apartheid era from 1948 onwards the symbol of the Day of the Covenant was used to emphasize the belief in the special calling of the whites in South Africa on behalf of the Christendom and on the necessity to protect the privileged position of whites[52].

3.5. Creating utopian final solutions

Most racial ideologies share the modernist conviction that human conditions can be improved by reorganising human affairs on a rational basis. They come into their own in the context of a design of the perfect society and the intention to implement the design through planned and consistent effort[53]. The rationale of racist ideology is that certain categories of human beings cannot be incorporated in the social order because they cannot be reformed. If these categories of people are excluded from society, human progress will be possible.

Religion is often helpful in creating utopian solutions that offers hope for a new world order, and restores the pride of a group. In the pseudo-theology of the German Christians the utopian design was the thousand year Reich – the kingdom of the liberated German Spirit. The German Reich was seen as the start of a new utopian eschatological dispensation[54]. It was a kingdom that had no room for anything but the German Spirit[55]. The Nazi designers of the perfect society split human life into worthy and unworthy, the first to be lovingly cultivated and given *Lebensraum*, the other to be distanced[56]. Apartheid theology sought a geographical reconstruction of society where each group develop within its own confines. Different races after all have a different potential. Technological civilisation was the expression of the white race alone, while black peoples

would express themselves through tribal cultures. By creating homelands for all the black tribes, a utopia would be created whereby different nations can develop in peace alongside each other. Apartheid would be the expression of God's original plan for His creation, that is, a society that recognises pluriformity and diversity by separating different cultures and races.

From the abovementioned it becomes clear that racist theologies and ideologies can be extremely dangerous because the utopian social order is always defined in contrast to an existing order that must be destroyed. Violence is often seen as a legitimate way to change the social order. In extreme cases such final utopian solutions might even lead to genocide.

4. Evaluating common elements in Nazi and Apartheid theology.

Although Apartheid theology and Nazi theology differed in the doctrines they proclaimed, and used various hermeneutical interpretation methods of Scripture that range from critical to fundamentalist methods, they do contain certain common theological presuppositions. It is important for Christianity to clearly identify these common features in destructive pseudo-Christian theology and to address the factors that gave rise to it. Christian theology especially needs to ask itself: In what way did hermeneutical methods of interpretation used within Christian theology provide opportunities for racists to distort the Christian religion?

4.1. Collectivist anthropology

Racist theology thinks in collectivist terms, and not in individual terms. At the heart of racist theology lies the definition of the human being as a racial being that derives his identity from a particular racial group. Race becomes the norm according to which the social relations are structured. A peaceful co-existence between different groups of people within the same environment is viewed as impossible, because different races and people are basically irreconcilable. In Nazi-theology pure Aryan descent became the criteria of the value of a human being and created a sense of exclusiveness that integrated and strengthened the group. Aryan descent and the German Volk actually became something divine, an organ through which God reveals Himself. The individual's life was seen as only having meaning through belonging to the group. The Afrikaner's notion of themselves as the elect people of God, in a similar way attached the worth of the individual to the group to which the individual belonged. Mixed descent and racial intermarriage was seen as an abomination in both Nazi and Apartheid theology.

Due to its collectivist premises racist theology thinks in terms of stereotypes and generalisations, and not in terms of the needs of individuals. Whenever the individual comes into view, it is as a member of

a race, group or nation. The interests of the group are always more important than the interests of the self. This is a distortion of the Bible that is the most authoritative source in Christianity. The Bible proclaims the unity of mankind that finds its origin in man's creation by God[57]. Every individual possess an inherent dignity, because all human beings were created in the image of God. Any notion of the superiority and inferiority of people due to gender, class, race, culture, ethnicity or religion distorts the biblical view of man[58].   Vorster[59] rightly states that the scope of the salvation in Christ depicts in Scripture the unity and equality of mankind. The reconciliatory work of Christ has no social preconditions, because Christ preached reconciliation irrespective of social divisions. This is explicitly stated in passages such as Galatians 3:28, Matthew 28 and Ephesians 2.

4.2. The identification of the church with an ethnic group

Racist theology characteristically identifies the true church with a race or ethnic nationality. Apartheid theology, for instance, held that the church may not transcend the cultural and racial boundaries that God set between nations. In the same way that God revealed Himself through Israel, He reveals Himself to a particular nation through the church of that nation. The only difference between the Old and the New Testament is that God now uses various churches within various nations[60].   In the theology of the German Christians the church was equated with the *Volk*, because the *Volk* is the organ through which the Spirit of God reveals itself.

However, this is again a distorted form of Christianity. In Scripture the church is not seen as the expression of the nation, it is the Body of Christ. Faith not national descent is the prerequisite for being a member of the Body of Christ. De Gruchy[61] rightly asks:

'The focus of redemption in the Scripture is the people of God. Can we then make use of the Christian gospel as a tool in the liberation of an ethnic group?'

Vorster[62] rightly states that the New Testament is the story of the divine ingathering of nations into a single community.   The universal morality that Christ preached extended to the concept of the church as a catholic community. According to the gospel of Matthew Christ gave His disciples the command to preach the gospel to people of all cultures, nations and groups and to make them members of the church[63].   The Church of Christ therefore does not obliterate nationality, masculinity or femininity, but transcends it in Christ[64]. The basic unity of the faithful, in Christ becomes visible in the church as a multi-cultural, multi-national and multi-racial community. The catholic nature of the church lays the duty on the church to cultivate catholic personalities that embrace otherness. Ethnicism, racism and prejudice are fundamentally opposed to the basic message of the Christian Gospel[65].

4.3. History as a form of divine revelation

The absence of legality in racist ideology necessitates an appeal to a higher legality that is founded upon history. A common feature in racist theologies is that the history of a group is regarded as a form of divine revelation. Racial theology in Germany, for example, had its roots in a natural theology that developed over a period of two hundred years in German Protestantism. It was strongly influenced by the pantheïstic views of Hegel who saw history as part of the being of God. Critical theologians such as Baur and Strauss utilised Hegel's views. The German Christians held that, in addition to Jesus Christ, God reveals himself in the history of the National Socialist Revolution, in German blood, race and soil and in the messianic personality of Adolf Hitler.

Nineteenth century and early twentieth century Afrikaner theology believed that God revealed Himself in the history of the Afrikaner nation in the same way that he has revealed Himself in the history of Israel. The Afrikaner nation therefore has a divine calling. Prime Minister D.F Malan[66] stated it as follows:

'The history of the Afrikaner reveals a determination and definiteness of purpose which make one feel that Afrikanerdom is not the work of man but of God'.

Late twentieth century Apartheid theology was characterised by an evolutionary notion of history. History is the process of the unfolding of God's original creative will. Because we can see the providence of God in history, history is the revelation of the will of God. The separation of nations, and therefore the policy of separate development, is part of the unfolding of God's original creational plan of pluriformity in creation.

As soon as history is regarded as a form of revelation faith and culture are harmonised and symbols of religion and forms of civilisation are identified with each other[67]. This opens the door for a subjective kind of theology that can easily degenerate into an ethnic theology. By subjective theology is meant a theology that is not faithful to the official scriptures and doctrines of a religion, but is based upon subjective perceptions, feelings, intuitions and interpretations of events and history. It leads to views, conclusions and interpretations that cannot be measured against an objective standard.

4.4 The assimilation of myths

Racist theology is eclectic in nature and is characterised by the appropriation of myths. The most common myth in racist theology is the notion of blood purity. For the nation to fulfil its divine destiny it must be isolated from admixtures that would dilute its purity. Nazi theology appropriated the Aryan myth, while Apartheid theology cited, without due regard for context, Old Testament texts that prohibited intermarriage

between the Israelites and other nations to support the mythical notion of blood purity. Humans, however, operate within a genetically open system. Because human genes are interchangeable there exist an unbounded variety of physical types among the peoples of the world[68].

The question is: Why does racist theology depend so much on myths? Racist theology is permeated with myth, precisely because the doctrine of racialism is a myth itself. Myths persist because they make the present more comprehensible by locating its origin in the past, thereby providing simple explanations to complex problems. They explain the unexplained, and fill the gaps in racist discourse, that authentic science and theology does not do. It is specifically the assimilation of myth and theology that makes racist theologies pseudo-theology and not authentic theology. Racist myths differ, amongst other things, from authentic theology in that they strengthen a particular racial ideology by polarising people, demonising opponents and justifying the ingroup. This stands in stark contrast to an authentic biblical Christian theology that is reconciliatory in style.

5 Conclusion

We can expect that new racist theologies will arise in the age of globalisation. The increasing migration of ethnic cultures to the Western world and the resultant feelings of xenophobia; the importation of foreign cultural artefacts from the West to Eastern, Asian and African countries at the expense of local cultures, folklore, traditions, customs, religions and language; cultural alienation; the erosion of collective social identity and the consolidation of new states creates an environment where racism may flourish. It is therefore important for Christianity to clearly identify the common characteristics of racist theology and to educate its adherents on the difference between authentic theology and pseudo-theology, so that they will not fall prey to destructive forms of religion that encourage racism. In Nazi theology and Apartheid theology a distorted form of Christian religion was used to create origin myths, idolise the ingroup, identify the outgroup, to create racial rites and symbols and to produce utopian final solutions. It also shared some common theological presuppositions such as a collectivist anthropology, the identification of the church with an ethnic group, the divination of a specific group's history and the assimilation of origin myths. Apartheid theology and Nazi theology are, indeed, important case studies and help us to learn from mistakes in the past.

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[2] Martin. N. Marger, *Race and ethnic relations. American and global perspectives, 3rd ed* (Belmont, Cal.,: Wadsworth, 1994), 27.

[3] Anthony.W. Marx, *Making race and nation. A comparison of the United States, South Africa and Brazil* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 58.

[4] Alan Davies*, Infected Christianity. A study of modern racism* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1988), 20.

[5] Johann. G Fichte, *Fichtes Reden an die Deutschen Nation* (Berlin: Deutsche Bibliothek, s.a), 72.

[6] Johann. G Herder, *Über den Ürsprung der Sprache, in, Abhandlung über den Ürsprung der Sprache. Text, Materialen, Kommentar. Reihe Hanser 269*, ed Wolfgang Prozz (München: Carl Hanser Verlag, s.a), 41.

[7] Fichte, 74, 75.

[8] Fichte, 76. Davies, 30.

[9] Fichte, 76.

[10] Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, trans., Ralph Manheim (London: Pimlico, 1974), 297.

[11] These notions can clearly be seen in the speeches of Paul Kruger, an Afrikaner president of the ZAR. Jacobus. S. Du Plessis, *President Kruger aan die Woord*, (Potchefstroom: Pro Rege, 1952), 92-93.

[12] Pieter.G.Johannes Meiring, "Nationalism in the Dutch Reformed Churches", in *Church and nationalism in South Africa*, ed. Theo Sundermeier (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1975), 58.

[13] Isaiah. 56, Ephesians. 2.

[14] Patrick Baskwell, "Kuyper and Apartheid. A revisiting", *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* 62/4 (2006):1274.

[15] Davies, 35.

[16] Albert Schweitzer, *The quest of the historical Jesus*, trans., William Montgomery , 3rd edition (SCM Press: London, 1954), 310.

[17] Gerrie Snyman, "Racial performance and religious complicity: Racialised discourse and perpetrator culture", *Scriptura* 90(2005):599.

[18] Ferdinand.C Baur, "Lectures on the history of Christian dogma", in *Ferdinand Christian Baur on the writing of Church History*, ed. and transl., Peter C Hodgson (New York: Oxford Press, 1968), 298.

[19] Baur, 297-298.

[20] Snyman, 599-600.

[21] Snyman, 600.

[22] Houston. S Chamberlain, *The foundations of the nineteenth century*, volume 1, trans., John Lees (London: Bodley Head, 1913), 200, 211.

[23] Davies, 47-48.

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[25] Arthur. Frey, *Cross and swastika. The ordeal of the German church*, trans., J.Strathearn Mcnab (London: Student Christian Movement Press, 1938), 85-87.

[26] Frey, 54, 70.

[27] Frey, 119.

[28] Frey, 120.

[29] Davies, 30, 37.

[30] Johannes. D. du Toit, *Die godsdienstige grondslag oor ons rassebeleid*, (FAK, 1944).

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[33] Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk, *Die NG Kerk in Suid-Afrika en rasseverhoudinge. Opsomming van die belangrikste uitsprake en besluite vanaf 1950-Desember 1960* (Pretoria: NG Kerkboekhandel, 1961), 8.

[34] Johann. Kinghorn, "Die groei van 'n teologie. Van sendingbeleid tot verskeidenheidsteologie", in *Die NG Kerk en Apartheid*, ed. Johann Kinghorn (Johannesburg: Macmillan, 1986), 94.

[35] Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk, *Ras, volk en nasie en volkeverhoudinge in die lig van die Skrif* (Kaapstad: NG Kerk Uitgewers, 1975), 12-17.

[36] Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk, 15. (Own translation).

[37] Jakobus. M Vorster, *Ethical perspectives on human rights* (Potchefstroom: PTP), 145.

[38] Marger, 27.

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[44] Frey, 121, 122.

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[53] Zygmunt Baumann, "Modernity, racism, extermination" in *Theories of race and racism. A reader*, eds. Les Back & John Solomos (London: Routledge, 2000), 216.

[54] Nico Vorster, "Preventing genocide. The role of the church", *The Scottish journal of theology* 59/4 (2006):387.

[55] Baumann, 216.

[56] Baumann, 217.

[57] Gen, 1:28, 5:1-2, Acts 17:26.

[58] Jakobus. M. Vorster, 152.

[59] Jakobus. M. Vorster, 153.

[60] Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk, "*Die NG Kerk in Suid-Afrika en rasseverhoudinge*", 37.

[61] John De Gruchy, *The church struggle in South Africa* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1979), 166.

[62] Jakobus. M. Vorster, 153.

[63] Mat 28:16-20.

[64] Gal 3:28.

[65] Nico Vorster, 391.

[66] Kistner, 85.

[67] Davies, 117.

[68] Marger, 19-20.